

Message Text

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INFO AMCONGEN HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 2224

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PFOR, CB, LA, TH, VN

SUBJ: THAI RELATIONS WITH ITS COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS

REF: A) BANGKOK 1893 B) 1115 C) 75 BANGKOK 26694

SUMMARY: LAO-THAI RELATIONS ARE PRESENTLY STABLE, THERE ARE NO SIGNS OF MOVEMENT IN RTG-DRV RELATIONS, AND TIES WITH CAMBODIA ARE PROGRESSING, ACCORDING TO MFA OFFICIAL. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY OFFICERS CALLED ON MFA OFFICER CONCERNED WITH SOUTHEAST ASIA FEBRUARY 2 FOR AN UPDATE ON THAI RELATIONS WITH INDOCHINA. ON THE WHOLE, THE OFFICER SEEMED GENERALLY SATISFIED.

2. LAOS-THAILAND. HE SAID THAT WHILE IT WAS NOT EASY TO DISCERN WHAT EXACTLY WAS THE MANDATE OF LAO DEPUTY MINISTER OF INFORMATION, CULTURE AND TOURISM OUNHEUAN PHOUNSAVAT DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO BANGKOK, THE PRINCIPAL PURPOSE SEEMED TO BE TO PERSUADE THE RTG TO REOPEN THE BORDER WITH LAOS AT OTHER POINTS. FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN HAD STATED
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THAT THIS MATTER COULD BE NEGOTIATED, BUT THE RTG BELIEVED

IT MUST KEEP THE BORDER CLOSED AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE AND OPERATE RIVER PATROLS IN ORDER TO PREVENT ARMS SMUGGLING AND DISCOURAGE REFUGEES FROM ENTERING THAILAND. (AN UNSTATED BUT UNDERSTOOD REASON WAS ALSO TO PREVENT PL INCURSIONS INTO THAILAND, HE SAID.) HOWEVER, CHATCHAI SEEMED TO BE CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF REOPENING THE BORDER AT ONE ADDITIONAL POINT, BUT IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHETHER CHATCHAI HAD DISCUSSED THIS YET WITH THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR (PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT).

3. ADMITTING THAT THE VISIT ENDED ON A DOUR NOTE WITH THE THAI PROTEST OF THE FISHING BOAT INCIDENT AND OUNHEUAN'S SOMEWHAT ANGRY REACTION (REF A), THE MFA OFFICER SAID HE THOUGHT THIS WOULD ALL SOON BE FORGOTTEN. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES SEEM TO HAVE "STABILIZED", WHICH IS, IN ITSELF, A GOOD THING. THE RTG HAS RECEIVED NO REPLY FROM THE PDRL TO CHATCHAI'S PROPOSAL TO VISIT VIENTIANE ON FEBRUARY 3-4, WHICH WAS NOT SURPRISING, AND IT WAS PROBABLE THAT NOW, WITH THE SERIES OF ASEAN MEETINGS COMING UP, CHATCHAI'S SCHEDULE WILL NOT PERMIT ENOUGH TIME FOR A VISIT FOR A MONTH OR SO. (COMMENT: THE MFA OFFICER DID NOT SEEM TO BE AT ALL UPSET OVER THE DELAY IN TALKS. END COMMENT.)

4. CHINESE POSITION IN LAOS. ON THE BASIS OF SEVERAL INDICATIONS, THE MFA OFFICER SPECULATED THAT THE CHINESE ARE PLAYING, IN A LOW KEY, A CAREFUL BUT DELIBERATE GAME IN LAOS DESIGNED TO UNDERMINE THE POSITION OF THEIR SOVIET ADVERSARY AND TO ENHANCE THEIR OWN, ONE AT WHICH HE THOUGHT THEY WERE SLOWLY MAKING PROGRESS. HE NOTED THAT A RECENT DIPLOMATIC VISITOR TO NORTH VIET-NAM AND LAOS (SIMONS, BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE CHIEF FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA) TOLD HIM THAT THE CHINESE ARE INCREASING THEIR INFLUENCE OVER THE LUANG PRABANG AREA (WHICH WE HAVE ALSO HEARD). HE ALSO OBSERVED THAT THE CHINESE AMBASSADOR TOLD THE THAI AMBASSADOR IN VIENNA IN EARLY DECEMBER WHAT A SHAME IT WAS THAT THE LAO REGIME FORCED THE KING TO ABDICATE, NOTING THAT THE KING WAS A UNIFYING INFLUENCE FOR THE COUNTRY.

5. NORTH VIET-NAM-THAILAND. THE MFA OFFICER SUGGESTED THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE NOW TAKEN ONE ANOTHER'S

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MEASURE FAIRLY WELL. HE THOUGHT THAT THE WAY IN WHICH HANOI INTERPRETS THE RTG'S ACTION IN ALLOWING AMERICAN RESIDUAL FORCES TO REMAIN AT WHATEVER STRENGTH IS FINALLY AGREED UPON WOULD HAVE AN IMPORTANT IMPACT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THAI-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS. AN ENCOURAGING SIGN, HE FELT, IS THE DETAILED KNOWLEDGE THE VIETNAMESE LEADERSHIP APPEARS TO HAVE, ACCORDING TO REPORTS THE THAI HAVE RECEIVED, ABOUT INDIVIDUAL THAI LEADERS, INDICATING A GENUINE

INTEREST IN THE COUNTRY. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE IS AGREEMENT IN ALL REPORTS THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE NEED AND WANT RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. IN ORDER TO BALANCE OFF THE SOVIETS AND CHINESE.

6. CAMBODIA-THAILAND. DESPITE CONTINUOUS SMALL PROBLEMS ALONG THE BORDER, RELATIONS WITH CAMBODIA ARE SATISFACTORY. OFFICIALS OF THE LIAISON OFFICES OF THE TWO COUNTRIES GET TOGETHER REGULARLY, MOST RECENTLY ON JANUARY 29. (IT WAS NOT TRUE, AS THE PRESS REPORTED, THAT MFA UNDERSECRETARY ANAN PANYARACHUN TRAVELLED TO ARANYAPRATHET FOR A MEETING.) THE RTG AGREED TO SELL THE CAMBODIANS 30,000 ADDITIONAL TONS OF SALT, THOUGH NOT AT CONCESSIONARY PRICES, AND TO DISCUSS THIS WEEK THE SALE OF PETROLEUM, WHICH THE CAMBODIANS BADLY DESIRE. CONTRARY TO REF B, THE MFA OFFICER SAID THAT THE CAMBODIANS HAVE BEEN PAYING FOR THEIR INITIAL PURCHASE OF SALT, SHIPPING BACK DRIED FISH AND DISCUSSING THE SHIPMENT OF TIMBER TO THAILAND.

7. NO ACTION IS OCCURRING ON THE THAI REQUEST TO RESOLVE THE UNCLEAR BORDER SITUATION IN THE ARANYAPRATHET-TA PHRAYA AREA OF PRACHINBURI PROVINCE, ALTHOUGH THERE APPEARS TO BE A TACIT CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT. SUCH INCIDENTS AS THE MINE DETONATION JANUARY 30 NEAR ARANYAPRATHET, WOUNDING TWO BORDER PATROL POLICEMEN, ARE WORRISOME. BECAUSE OF THIS GENERAL STATE OF AFFAIRS, FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI LAUNCHED ANOTHER APPEAL THREE WEEKS AGO TO CAMBODIAN DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IENG SARY FOR A MEETING, TO WHICH THERE HAS BEEN NO REPLY.

8. OTHER CAMBODIAN DISCUSSION. ACCORDING TO AN "UN-IMPEACHABLE" COMMUNIST SOURCE (SURELY THE CHINESE), A MEETING OF TOP PARTY OFFICIALS TOOK PLACE IN CAMBODIA AT THE CONFIDENTIAL

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END OF NOVEMBER OR BEGINNING OF DECEMBER TO DISCUSS IMPORTANT POLICY MATTERS, INCLUDING FUTURE FOREIGN POLICY MOVES. THE THAI WERE REASSURED BY THE REPORT THAT PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING DECIDED TO GO SLOWLY, BUT MOVE POSITIVELY, REGARDING CAMBODIAN RELATIONS WITH THAILAND. THE SAME SOURCE SUGGESTED THAT THE CAMBODIAN COMMUNIST PARTY OFFICIALS DECIDED TO RECEIVE ADDITIONAL DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN PHNOM PENH.

9. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT A CONTINUING SERIES OF MEETINGS HAVE BEEN OCCURRING INSIDE CAMBODIA RECENTLY, INCLUDING, OF COURSE, THE MID-DECEMBER CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION. THE MFA OFFICIAL NOTED THAT A CAMBODIAN REPRESENTATIVE IN FRANCE, OK SOKHOEUN, RETURNED HOME IN NOVEMBER AND HAS NOT GONE BACK TO PARIS. WE ALSO CITED THE CASES OF THE CAMBODIAN

AMBASSADORS IN HANOI AND PEKING WHO APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN AWAY FROM POST FOR SOME TIME.

10. WITHOUT REVEALING HIS SOURCE, THE MFA OFFICER ALSO MENTIONED THAT NEGOTIATIONS ARE CURRENTLY UNDERWAY BETWEEN THE CAMBODIANS AND VIETNAMESE CONCERNING THE "RESIDUAL FORCE" NORTH VIET-NAM WILL BE PERMITTED TO LEAVE IN EASTERN CAMBODIA. FINALLY, AGAIN WITHOUT CITING A SOURCE, THE OFFICER SAID IT WOULD SEEM THAT KHIEU SAMPHAN AND IENG SARY HAVE A GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP BUILT ON RESPECT FOR ONE ANOTHER'S ABILITIES, KHIEU SAMPHAN SERVING AS THE ELDER WHO IS THE PLANNER AND THEORETICIAN, AND IENG SARY SERVING AS THE JUNIOR WHO EXECUTES THE PLANS.

11. COMMENT: IT APPEARS FROM THE MFA OFFICER'S COMMENTS THAT THERE IS NO MOVEMENT AT PRESENT ON HANOI-BANGKOK TIES, WITH THE EXCEPTION, AS HE POINTED OUT, OF MINOR CONVERSATIONS IN VIENTIANE BETWEEN AMBASSADORS OF THE TWO COUNTRIES. BASED ON THIS CONVERSATION AND A PREVIOUS ONE (REF C), IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE CHINESE ARE PROVIDING SOME INFORMATION TO THE THAI, PARTICULARLY ON CAMBODIAN DEVELOPMENTS. THE INFORMATION MAY BE SLANTED, BUT IT IS INTERESTING, AND WE HOPE TO BE ABLE TO BE ON THE RECEIVING END INCREASINGLY. WHITEHOUSE

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